

THE NCS™

The National Citizen Survey™

Duluth, MN

FINAL REPORT
2015



NRC
National Research Center Inc

2955 Valmont Road Suite 300
Boulder, Colorado 80301
n-r-c.com • 303-444-7863



Leaders at the Core of Better Communities

777 North Capitol Street NE Suite 500
Washington, DC 20002
icma.org • 800-745-8780

Summary

The National Citizen Survey™ (The NCS™) is a collaborative effort between National Research Center, Inc. (NRC) and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA). The survey and its administration are standardized to assure high quality research methods and directly comparable results across The NCS communities. The NCS captures residents' opinions within the three pillars of a community (Community Characteristics, Governance and Participation) across eight central facets of community (Safety, Mobility, Natural Environment, Built Environment, Economy, Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement). This report discusses trends over time, comparing the 2015 ratings for the City of Duluth to its previous survey results in 2014, 2013, 2012, 2011, 2010 and 2009. Additional reports and technical appendices are available under separate cover.

Trend data for Duluth represent important comparison data and should be examined for improvements or declines. Deviations from stable trends over time, especially, represent opportunities for understanding how local policies, programs or public information may have affected residents' opinions.

Meaningful differences between survey years have been noted within the following tables as being "higher" or "lower" if the differences are greater than six percentage points between the 2014 and 2015 surveys, otherwise the comparison between 2014 and 2015 are noted as being "similar." Additionally, benchmark comparisons for all survey years are presented for reference. Changes in the benchmark comparison over time can be impacted by various trends, including varying survey cycles for the individual communities that comprise the benchmarks, regional and national economic or other events, as well as emerging survey methodologies.

Overall, ratings in Duluth for 2015 generally remained stable. Of the 118 items for which comparisons were available, 104 items were rated similarly in 2014 and 2015, 10 items showed a decrease in ratings and four showed an increase in ratings. Notable trends over time included the following:

- Five of the 10 ratings that showed lower ratings in 2015 compared to 2014 were in Community Characteristics, although the vast majority of these ratings were similar between years. In Recreation and Wellness, residents gave less positive ratings to the availability of mental health care and preventive health services in 2015 compared to 2014. Similarly, 2015 ratings were lower in Education and Enrichment for the availability of cultural/arts/music activities and religious or spiritual events and activities relative to 2014. In 2015, Mobility showed lower ratings for ease of walking and higher ratings for the ease of travel by public transportation.
- Few ratings in the pillar of Governance changed between 2014 and 2015. Observed trends included lower ratings in 2015 compared to the previous year for crime prevention, code enforcement, public libraries and treating all residents fairly. The rating for recreation centers increased in 2015 relative to 2014.
- As in other areas, Participation levels were relatively steady between the survey years of 2015 and 2014. Fewer residents reported contacting City employees, while more had participated in religious or spiritual activities or volunteered.

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Table 1: Community Characteristics General

	Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)							2015 rating compared to 2014
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	
Overall quality of life	68%	72%	73%	78%	79%	83%	77%	Similar
Overall image	58%	65%	68%	72%	69%	78%	75%	Similar
Place to live	78%	81%	80%	87%	85%	85%	84%	Similar
Neighborhood	72%	70%	72%	70%	71%	74%	73%	Similar
Place to raise children	73%	74%	74%	80%	76%	76%	75%	Similar
Place to retire	55%	55%	53%	64%	59%	59%	58%	Similar
Overall appearance	47%	55%	58%	60%	51%	72%	74%	Similar

Table 2: Community Characteristics by Facet

		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)							2015 rating compared to 2014
		2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	
Safety	Overall feeling of safety	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	70%	70%	Similar
	Safe in neighborhood	92%	92%	94%	93%	89%	92%	93%	Similar
	Safe downtown/commercial area	73%	72%	75%	75%	64%	73%	70%	Similar
Mobility	Overall ease of travel	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	75%	75%	Similar
	Paths and walking trails	67%	74%	75%	77%	79%	85%	84%	Similar
	Ease of walking	59%	61%	60%	67%	65%	74%	67%	Lower
	Travel by bicycle	42%	41%	44%	43%	49%	53%	51%	Similar
	Travel by public transportation	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	53%	64%	Higher
	Travel by car	53%	56%	53%	66%	60%	72%	72%	Similar
	Public parking	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	36%	37%	Similar
	Traffic flow	48%	55%	49%	54%	63%	70%	69%	Similar
	Overall natural environment	82%	82%	84%	86%	89%	90%	89%	Similar
Natural Environment	Cleanliness	43%	50%	55%	58%	52%	69%	68%	Similar
	Air quality	79%	81%	83%	83%	87%	92%	91%	Similar
	Overall built environment	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	63%	63%	Similar
Built Environment	New development in Duluth	31%	39%	44%	42%	43%	62%	58%	Similar
	Affordable quality housing	30%	39%	33%	31%	31%	27%	30%	Similar
	Housing options	43%	48%	43%	39%	37%	38%	36%	Similar
	Public places	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	82%	76%	Similar
	Overall economic health	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	45%	50%	Similar
	Vibrant downtown/commercial area	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	47%	45%	Similar
Economy	Business and services	51%	58%	59%	59%	58%	66%	69%	Similar
	Cost of living	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	43%	42%	Similar
	Shopping opportunities	54%	58%	64%	62%	61%	67%	67%	Similar
	Employment opportunities	14%	13%	20%	23%	25%	37%	41%	Similar
	Place to visit	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	92%	93%	Similar
	Place to work	37%	39%	49%	51%	52%	58%	59%	Similar
	Health and wellness	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	83%	80%	Similar
	Mental health care	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	66%	55%	Lower
	Preventive health services	65%	65%	69%	68%	73%	82%	74%	Lower
	Health care	54%	57%	59%	61%	62%	75%	72%	Similar
Recreation and Wellness	Food	68%	67%	68%	68%	70%	71%	72%	Similar
	Recreational opportunities	70%	68%	76%	74%	82%	85%	84%	Similar
	Fitness opportunities	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	85%	83%	Similar
	Religious or spiritual events and activities	82%	81%	81%	79%	81%	87%	81%	Lower
Education and Enrichment	Cultural/arts/music activities	NA	NA	64%	63%	64%	82%	75%	Lower
	K-12 education	49%	49%	56%	54%	56%	62%	59%	Similar
	Child care/preschool	32%	42%	37%	43%	35%	54%	51%	Similar
Community Engagement	Social events and activities	61%	65%	66%	72%	73%	77%	72%	Similar
	Neighborliness	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	58%	56%	Similar

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		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good, very/somewhat safe)							2015 rating compared to 2014
		2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	
	Openness and acceptance	45%	37%	46%	44%	44%	46%	44%	Similar
	Opportunities to participate in community matters	69%	64%	63%	64%	71%	71%	68%	Similar
	Opportunities to volunteer	85%	83%	86%	85%	86%	85%	83%	Similar

Table 3: Governance General

	Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)							2015 rating compared to 2014
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	
Services provided by Duluth	49%	56%	68%	67%	62%	68%	71%	Similar
Customer service	68%	64%	67%	69%	72%	71%	71%	Similar
Value of services for taxes paid	28%	34%	45%	40%	37%	44%	44%	Similar
Overall direction	33%	43%	51%	56%	47%	67%	64%	Similar
Welcoming citizen involvement	42%	50%	52%	56%	50%	59%	55%	Similar
Confidence in City government	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	55%	55%	Similar
Acting in the best interest of Duluth	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	58%	58%	Similar
Being honest	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	60%	60%	Similar
Treating all residents fairly	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	57%	49%	Lower
Services provided by the Federal Government	37%	40%	46%	42%	39%	41%	45%	Similar

Table 4: Governance by Facet

		Percent rating positively (e.g., excellent/good)							2015 rating compared to 2014
		2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	
Safety	Police	79%	74%	78%	78%	82%	81%	80%	Similar
	Fire	92%	89%	90%	93%	95%	93%	96%	Similar
	Ambulance/EMS	90%	88%	85%	89%	92%	87%	91%	Similar
	Crime prevention	56%	54%	60%	56%	50%	67%	59%	Lower
	Fire prevention	76%	73%	75%	75%	76%	81%	76%	Similar
	Animal control	53%	54%	54%	56%	60%	60%	56%	Similar
	Emergency preparedness	57%	61%	60%	66%	60%	63%	62%	Similar
Mobility	Traffic enforcement	60%	56%	61%	55%	62%	67%	65%	Similar
	Street repair	2%	8%	11%	17%	6%	13%	9%	Similar
	Street cleaning	22%	32%	37%	50%	41%	38%	42%	Similar
	Street lighting	41%	42%	48%	49%	54%	55%	51%	Similar
	Snow removal	48%	53%	64%	63%	57%	58%	59%	Similar
	Sidewalk maintenance	19%	23%	29%	31%	29%	30%	29%	Similar
	Bus or transit services	73%	75%	70%	69%	76%	68%	71%	Similar
Natural Environment	Drinking water	87%	89%	87%	89%	87%	90%	91%	Similar
	Natural areas preservation	57%	59%	63%	66%	66%	70%	69%	Similar
	Open space	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	71%	68%	Similar
Built Environment	Storm drainage	33%	46%	53%	57%	46%	55%	54%	Similar
	Sewer services	63%	67%	69%	73%	71%	77%	79%	Similar
	Power utility	73%	72%	76%	83%	79%	80%	83%	Similar
	Land use, planning and zoning	26%	29%	39%	37%	34%	49%	48%	Similar
	Code enforcement	18%	20%	25%	24%	22%	33%	25%	Lower
Economy	Economic development	21%	24%	31%	32%	33%	50%	49%	Similar
Recreation and Wellness	City parks	70%	78%	80%	81%	83%	83%	79%	Similar
	Recreation centers	50%	59%	61%	58%	63%	71%	77%	Higher
Education and Enrichment	Public libraries	60%	61%	66%	82%	81%	81%	74%	Lower

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Table 5: Participation General

	Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)							2015 rating compared to 2014
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	
Sense of community	53%	56%	61%	63%	63%	62%	61%	Similar
Recommend Duluth	75%	80%	81%	84%	84%	83%	86%	Similar
Remain in Duluth	78%	76%	75%	84%	86%	84%	83%	Similar
Contacted Duluth employees	59%	52%	51%	43%	49%	48%	41%	Lower

Table 6: Participation by Facet

		Percent rating positively (e.g., always/sometimes, more than once a month, yes)							2015 rating compared to 2014
		2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	
Safety	Did NOT report a crime	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	74%	75%	Similar
	Was NOT the victim of a crime	83%	84%	82%	82%	86%	80%	83%	Similar
Mobility	Used public transportation instead of driving	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	32%	31%	Similar
	Carpooled instead of driving alone	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	54%	52%	Similar
	Walked or biked instead of driving	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	65%	66%	Similar
Natural Environment	Made home more energy efficient	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	63%	67%	Similar
	Recycled at home	94%	94%	96%	97%	96%	97%	96%	Similar
Built Environment	NOT under housing cost stress	66%	67%	69%	68%	72%	70%	72%	Similar
Economy	Purchased goods or services in Duluth	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	98%	98%	Similar
	Economy will have positive impact on income	7%	13%	13%	19%	20%	34%	29%	Similar
	Work in Duluth	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	65%	64%	Similar
	Used Duluth recreation centers	61%	59%	61%	64%	65%	69%	70%	Similar
Recreation and Wellness	Visited a City park	92%	92%	90%	93%	92%	90%	90%	Similar
	Ate 5 portions of fruits and vegetables	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	82%	84%	Similar
	Participated in moderate or vigorous physical activity	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	88%	85%	Similar
	In very good to excellent health	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	65%	63%	Similar
Education and Enrichment	Used Duluth public libraries	71%	70%	69%	72%	64%	62%	59%	Similar
	Participated in religious or spiritual activities	63%	64%	59%	59%	60%	46%	59%	Higher
Community Engagement	Campaigned for an issue, cause or candidate	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	26%	26%	Similar
	Contacted Duluth elected officials	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	20%	18%	Similar
	Volunteered	61%	65%	66%	65%	63%	57%	64%	Higher
	Talked to or visited with neighbors	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	92%	92%	Similar
	Done a favor for a neighbor	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	81%	83%	Similar
	Attended a local public meeting	34%	33%	30%	32%	35%	21%	22%	Similar
	Watched a local public meeting	54%	52%	48%	50%	51%	31%	34%	Similar
	Read or watched local news	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	87%	88%	Similar
	Voted in local elections	90%	81%	77%	76%	92%	86%	90%	Similar

Special Topics

The City of Duluth included three questions of special interest on The NCS, pertaining to a variety of topics.

Figure 1: Public Approval for Mayor and City Council

Please indicate your level of approval or disapproval with each of the following:

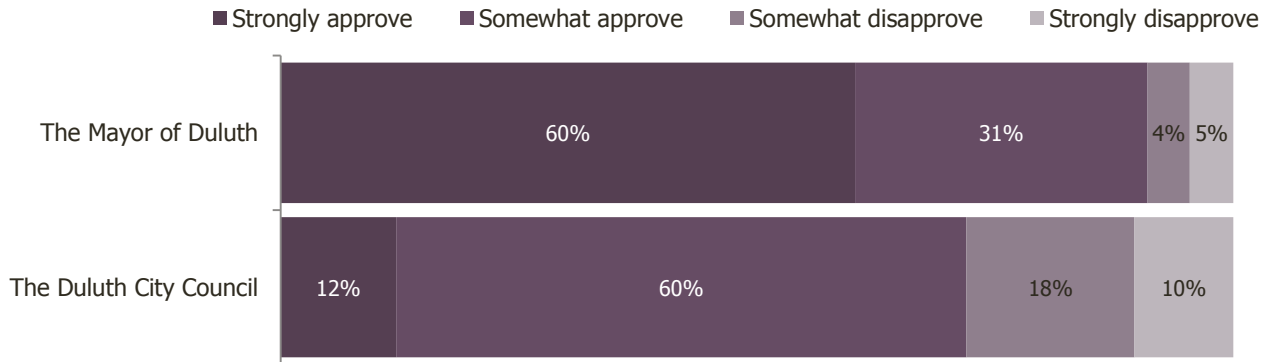


Figure 2: Liquor Sales in Lakeside

Currently, certain types of liquor sales are prohibited in the Lakeside neighborhood (i.e. liquor stores and certain restaurant liquor services). To what extent would you support or oppose a legislation change to allow the sale of beer, wine and liquor in Lakeside?

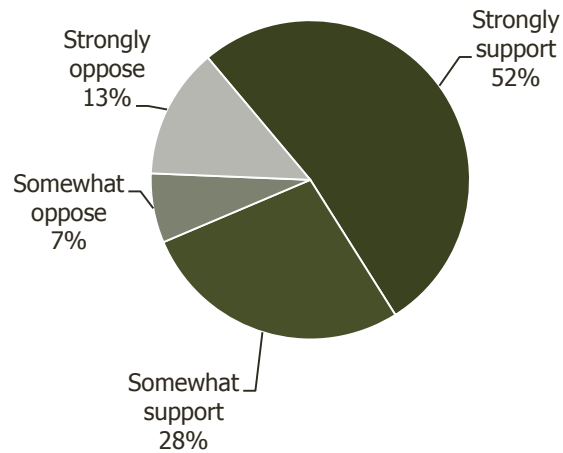


Figure 3: Duluth's Reputation over Time

Over the past 10 years, Duluth's overall reputation has:

